

8N



UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
United States Patent and Trademark Office
Address: COMMISSIONER FOR PATENTS
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450
www.uspto.gov

APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/939,535	08/24/2001	Lori Tassone Holmes	KCC-16,221	2474

35844 7590 03/24/2005

PAULEY PETERSEN & ERICKSON
2800 WEST HIGGINS ROAD
HOFFMAN ESTATES, IL 60195

EXAMINER

STEPHENS, JACQUELINE F

ART UNIT PAPER NUMBER

3761

DATE MAILED: 03/24/2005

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

09/939,535

Applicant(s)

HOLMES ET AL.

Examiner

Jacqueline F Stephens

Art Unit

3761

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 28 February 2005.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1,2,4,6,9-12,14-20,26-33,35-43,57,58,60-63, 65, 68-70,72-77 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) 1,2,4,6,9-12,14-20,27-33 and 35-42 is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 26,43,57,58,60-63,65,68-70 and 72-77 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
- ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 - ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 - ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- ☐ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____
- ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____
- ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- ☐ Other: _____

DETAILED ACTION

Continued Examination Under 37 CFR 1.114

1. A request for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, including the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e), was filed in this application after final rejection. Since this application is eligible for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, and the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e) has been timely paid, the finality of the previous Office action has been withdrawn pursuant to 37 CFR 1.114. Applicant's submission filed on 2/28/05 has been entered.

Note: Response to arguments filed 1/27/05, repeated from Advisory Action mailed 2/08/05.

Response to Arguments

2. Applicant's arguments filed 1/27/05 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive. Applicant repeats the argument that a person skilled in the art can visually and/or tactically identify drum-formed materials subsequent to the manufacturing process because drum-formed materials have properties distinguishable from other materials. Applicant is urged to provide the distinguishing characteristics in arguments. The process of making the product does not appear to change the end product, thus applicant has the burden of providing evidence establishing an unobvious difference between the claimed product and the prior art product: "The lack of physical description in a product-by-process claim makes determination of the patentability of the claim more

Art Unit: 3761

difficult, since in spite of the fact that the claim may recite only process limitations, it is the patentability of the product claimed and not of the recited process steps which must be established. We are therefore of the opinion that when the prior art discloses a product which reasonably appears to be either identical with or only slightly different than a product claimed in a product-by-process claim, a rejection based alternatively on either section 102 or section 103 of the statute is eminently fair and acceptable. As a practical matter, the Patent Office is not equipped to manufacture products by the myriad of processes put before it and then obtain prior art products and make physical comparisons therewith." In re Brown, 459 F.2d 531, 535, 173 USPQ 685, 688 (CCPA 1972). MPEP 21113.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

3. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

4. Claims 26, 43, 57-58, 60-63, 68, 70, and 72-77 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Everett et al. WO 99/17695.

As to claim 26, Everett discloses an absorbent material comprising: an upper layer 48 including pulp fluff and superabsorbent material and a lower layer 50 including pulp fluff and superabsorbent material (page 20, line 26 through page 21, line 24); wherein the absorbent material has a thickness in a range of between 0.5 and 7.5 mm

Art Unit: 3761

(page 13, lines 9-12), and an absorbent capacity between about 14 and 40 grams 0.9 w/v% saline solution per gram of absorbent material (page 23, lines 11-19), and the lower layer has a greater density than the upper layer (page 21, lines 10-24; page 78, line 6-9 and page 80, lines 3-5. Everett discloses the upper layer comprises between 20 and 75wt%, which includes a component of the range of between 10 and 80% superabsorbent (page 78, lines 15-16). As to the limitations of the upper layer being drum -formed and the lower layer being air laid, these limitations are directed to a process of making the article. "Even though product-by-process claims are limited by and defined by the process, determination of patentability is based on the product itself. The patentability of a product does not depend on its method of production. If the product in the product-by-process claim is the same as or obvious from a product of the prior art, the claim is unpatentable even though the prior product was made by a different process." In re Thorpe, 777 F.2d 695, 698, 227 USPQ 964, 966 (Fed. Cir. 1985) (citations omitted). MPEP 2113.

The upper layer 48 comprises a bottom surface facing the lower layer 50 (Figure 1). Applicant has not defined the surface area relative to the claims. Giving the broadest reasonable interpretation, the examiner considers any portion of the bottom surface of the upper layer as a surface area, which can be larger than any portion of the top surface of the lower layer, thereby meeting the claim limitations.

As to claim 57, Everett discloses an upper layer of density $0.03 \text{ g/cm}^3 - .4 \text{ g/cm}^3$ (page 78, lines 7-8). Everett discloses the lower layer has a density of not less than

Art Unit: 3761

about 0.1g/cm^3 and not more than about 0.3g/cm^3 (page 80, lines 3-4).

As to claim 58, Everett discloses the upper layer comprises between 20 and 75wt%, which includes the range of between 20 and 70% superabsorbent (page 78, lines 15-16).

As to claim 60, see page 13, lines 9-12.

As to claim 61, Everett discloses the absorbent material has an absorbent capacity of at least 16 grams w/v% saline solution per gram of absorbent material (page 23, lines 11-19).

As to claim 62, Everett discloses two or more layers (page 25, lines 34-35).

As to claims 63, Everett discloses a plurality of layers on the upper layer (page 79, claim 12).

As to claim 68, Everett discloses various forms of the absorbent article, see page 6, lines 16-25 directed toward an intended use of the article.

As to claim 43, Everett discloses an absorbent garment comprising: a chassis defining a waist opening and first and second leg openings: the chassis including a liquid-permeable body side liner, an absorbent assembly, and a substantially liquid-

Art Unit: 3761

impermeable outer cover layer (page 15, lines 9-18). Everett discloses an absorbent material comprising, an upper layer 48 including pulp fluff and superabsorbent material and a lower layer 50 including pulp fluff and superabsorbent material (page 20, line 26 through page 21, line 24); wherein the absorbent material has a thickness in a range of between 0.5 and 7.5 mm (page 13, lines 9-12), and an absorbent capacity between about 14 and 40 grams w/v% saline solution per gram of absorbent material (page 23, lines 11-19), and the lower layer has a greater density than the upper layer (page 21, lines 10-24; page 78, line 6-9 and page 80, lines 3-5). The limitations of the upper layer being drum -formed and the lower layer being air laid are directed to a process of making the article. "Even though product-by-process claims are limited by and defined by the process, determination of patentability is based on the product itself. The patentability of a product does not depend on its method of production. If the product in the product-by-process claim is the same as or obvious from a product of the prior art, the claim is unpatentable even though the prior product was made by a different process." *In re Thorpe*, 777 F.2d 695, 698, 227 USPQ 964, 966 (Fed. Cir. 1985) (citations omitted). MPEP 2113.

With respect to the limitation of "the lower layer is discontinuous", applicant has not defined 'discontinuous' with respect to the claimed structure. Giving the broadest reasonable interpretation, the examiner considers the T-shaped lower layer discontinuous with respect to a equidistant with. The lower layer is placed in desired locations of the absorbent assembly (Figures 1, 2, 3, and 6).

As to claim 69, Everett discloses an upper layer of density 0.03 g/cm^3 - $.4 \text{ g/cm}^3$ (page 78, lines 7-8). Everett discloses the lower layer has a density of not less than about 0.1 g/cm^3 and not more than about 0.3 g/cm^3 (page 80, lines 3-4).

As to claim 70, Everett discloses the upper layer comprises between 20 and 75wt%, which includes the range of between 20 and 70% superabsorbent (page 78, lines 15-16). Everett discloses the upper layer comprises between 20 and 75wt%, which includes a component of the range of between 10 and 80% superabsorbent (page 78, lines 15-16).

As to claim 72, see page 13, lines 9-12.

As to claim 73, Everett discloses the absorbent material has an absorbent capacity of at least 16 grams 0.9 w/v% saline solution per gram of absorbent material (page 23, lines 11-19).

As to claim 74, Everett discloses two or more layers (page 25, lines 34-35).

As to claims 75 and 76, the limitations of the upper layer being drum -formed and the lower layer being air laid are directed to a process of making the article. "Even though product-by-process claims are limited by and defined by the process, determination of patentability is based on the product itself. The patentability of a product does not depend on its method of production. If the product in the product-by-

Art Unit: 3761

process claim is the same as or obvious from a product of the prior art, the claim is unpatentable even though the prior product was made by a different process.” In re Thorpe, 777 F.2d 695, 698, 227 USPQ 964, 966 (Fed. Cir. 1985) (citations omitted). MPEP 2113.

As to claims 77, Everett discloses a plurality of layers on the upper layer (page 79, claim 12).

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

5. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

6. This application currently names joint inventors. In considering patentability of the claims under 35 U.S.C. 103(a), the examiner presumes that the subject matter of the various claims was commonly owned at the time any inventions covered therein were made absent any evidence to the contrary. Applicant is advised of the obligation under 37 CFR 1.56 to point out the inventor and invention dates of each claim that was not commonly owned at the time a later invention was made in order for the examiner to consider the applicability of 35 U.S.C. 103(c) and potential 35 U.S.C. 102(e), (f) or (g) prior art under 35 U.S.C. 103(a).


8. Claim 65 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Everett in view of Burgeni USPN 3494362. Everett discloses the present invention substantially as claimed. However, Everett does not disclose the lower layer is discontinuous. Burgeni discloses an absorbent article having a multi-layered absorbent with a discontinuous lower layer in the sense that the lower layer is corrugated, for the benefit of providing increased capillarity, increased fluid retentivity, and increased structural stability to the fibrous core, particularly in the transverse direction (col. 2, lines 18-39). It would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify the lower layer to be discontinuous for the benefits disclosed in Burgeni.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Jacqueline F Stephens whose telephone number is (571) 272-4937. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday-Friday 9:00-5:30.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Larry Schwartz can be reached on (571)272-4390. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 703-872-9306.

Art Unit: 3761

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).


Jacqueline F Stephens
Examiner
Art Unit 3761

March 19, 2005